

DISCOURSE STRUCTURE OF GENDER DIFFERENCES IN FLIRTATION AND SELF-PRESENTATION ON NIGERIAN DATING PLATFORMS

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Abstract

This paper presents the discourse structure of gender differences in flirtation and self-presentation on Nigerian dating platforms such as the afrosmeet, afro-introduction, nexus (for specific group), mama connect and olosho dating among others. The dating platforms are designed to accommodate both male and female customers who are looking for relationship partners either on casual, deep or specific interest, consequently, language use on the platforms is civil, social and persuasive. This paper demonstrates that gender differences in flirtation and self-presentation on Nigerian and similar dating platforms are shaped by traditional gender roles and expectations. Women's emphasis on visual attractiveness and men's focus on status and interests reflect broader societal norms and mate selection strategies. While both genders engage in strategic self-presentation and some level of deception, the motivations and methods differ, with women prioritizing physical appeal and men emphasizing achievements and status. Content analysis of expressions used on the dating platforms was carried out using general discourse analysis framework. The finding reveals that gender differences in flirtation and self-presentation on Nigerian dating platforms largely mirror global trends, with women emphasizing visual appeal and men focusing on status and interests. Both genders strategically manage

their profiles to maximize attractiveness, shaped by enduring gender norms and user motivations.

Key Words: Gender, Discourse, Flirtation, Dating, Self-Presentation

Introduction

Gender differences in flirtation and self-presentation reflect broader global patterns, with women tending to emphasise visual attractiveness and men focusing more on status, interests, and textual self-promotion. Research shows that women are more likely to engage in sexualized and visually appealing self-presentation, often using carefully selected photos and softer language, while men highlight achievements, status, and hobbies in their profiles. These behaviours are shaped by traditional gender roles and expectations. Findings from African and global contexts suggest that these patterns are consistent across cultures. Both genders strategically manage their self-presentations to maximise attractiveness and match potential, with men more likely to initiate contact and women more selective in their responses. Both genders carefully select their language to express the desires that are uppermost to them and their intention for seeking a partner in a relationship. The self-presentation pattern exhibited by women generally on global dating websites such as Tinder, Bumble, Badoo, and OkCupid shows that women are more likely to use sexualized and visually appealing profile photos, emphasizing physical attractiveness and traditional femininity. Men, on the other hand, tend to highlight status, achievements, and interests, often using more detailed textual self-presentation. These patterns are consistent with traditional gender norms and are not significantly influenced by platform type. When it comes to flirtation and communication strategies, men are generally more direct in initiating contact and may exaggerate positive traits, especially when the likelihood of face-to-face meetings is low. Women tend to use softer, more approachable language and are more selective in their responses, often acting as

gatekeepers in the communication process. Both genders strategically manage their self-presentations to maximise attractiveness and match potential. However, in morality, both men and women engage in some level of deception in their profiles, but the focus differs: women are more likely to embellish physical appearance, while men may exaggerate status, height, or relationship goals. The degree of deception is influenced by the anticipated likelihood of meeting in person, with men increasing self-promotion when face-to-face meetings are less likely.

During self-presentations, men and women create profiles that are marketable to attract and persuade potential partners. The self-presentation functions as a powerful tool for demonstrating desirable traits. Individuals display appealing qualities which align with cultural expectations of attractiveness, stability, competence, and emotional warmth. In a physical social setting, men and women engage in subtle yet deliberate forms of self-presentations to portray themselves as worthy partners through careful use of words or expressions which eulogise their behaviours, character, and appearance. This trend continues in the digital space, as modern relationships increasingly value mutual respect, compatibility, and shared aspirations.

The digital space is now a strategic platform that bridges distance and culture as it allows for instant communication across geographical boundaries. With the social media, messaging apps and virtual communities, people from different background and orientation can share ideas, values and experiences easily. The interactions both minimize the limitations of physical distance and promote cultural exchange, understanding as well as collaborations. The digital environment therefore functions as a global meeting point where different voices can interact and learn from One another. On the internet, affection and attraction are always created by the use of words long before any physical contact takes place. On Nigeria dating platforms such as Afro-introduction, Afromeets, Nexus and Olosho Dating.com, language is now a powerful tool of expression by which men and women express their desires and present themselves in a

manner they believe will win the heart of a potential partner. Through this gendered pattern of expressions, Nigerian men and women create their own styles of romantic approach believing that their expressions will facilitate connections, trust and love. Examining these communication differences provides insight into both online dating behaviour and broader cultural beliefs about gender, relationships and love.

Existing studies on how men and women present themselves online for relationship shows that much has not been done on Nigeria dating platforms, unlike other global platforms such as Tinder, Bumble, Badoo, and OkCupid that may have been restricted to certain races. The Nigeria dating platform is unique and specifically meant to cater for the romantic aspirations of the people with diverse cultures and languages. Consequently, there is a need to examine how the teeming population of young lovers in Nigeria structure their expressions when presenting themselves for romantic experience online. This study will fill a significant gap in existing literature by highlighting the distinctive linguistic features of Nigerian men and women on dating websites. The objectives of this study include the exploration of how men and women structure their self-presentation and flirt online; the identification of the linguistic and communicative strategies used for self-presentation; presentation of the similarities and dissimilarities in men's and women's self-presentation and flirting techniques; and examination of the influence of technology and culture on online flirting and self-presentation.

Literature Review

Existing scholarship has extensively examined gendered differences in flirtation and self-presentation on Nigerian dating platforms. Studies indicate that women tend to foreground emotional and affective dimensions of interaction, often emphasising personal

attributes such as cultural values, professional identity, and economic stability. For instance, Dunu and Abaneme (2022) argue that female users strategically deploy subtle affiliative flirtation cues, such as soft language, emojis, and expressions of interest, to foster intimacy. Similarly, Onyechi and Udechukwu (2023) observe that women utilize photographs and textual narratives to construct multiple online selves, with particular emphasis on physical attractiveness and emotional connectivity. In contrast, male users are more inclined to highlight achievements, social status, and career aspirations, reflecting dominant Nigerian gender ideologies that associate masculinity with success and authority. Male flirtation strategies typically involve the use of compliments, humour, and discussions of shared interests to signal desirability and intent.

Age also emerges as a significant factor influencing women's flirtation practices. Adewole (2021) notes that younger women (aged 18–22) often prioritize physical beauty and playful flirtation, particularly on romance- and networking-oriented media platforms. Conversely, older women (aged 27–38) tend to present themselves as independent, career-focused, and accomplished, and frequently adopt more direct and assertive flirtation styles. These differences underscore the intersection of age, gender, and self-presentation in online dating contexts.

Moreover, Nigerian socio-cultural norms play a critical role in shaping online flirtation behaviours. According to Okeke (2025), women are traditionally expected to exhibit submissiveness within heterosexual relationships; however, digital dating platforms provide spaces for negotiating and contesting these expectations. Through flirtatious discourse, women increasingly construct empowered and agentive identities, thereby creating a tension between conventional gender norms and contemporary digital practices. This tension significantly influences how users navigate intimacy and relational goals online.

Research has also identified divergent motivations underlying flirtation on Nigerian dating platforms. Nwankwo et al. (2023) report that emotional fulfilment and meaningful connection constitute primary motivations for many female users (36.4%), alongside social interaction and seeking a romantic partner. In contrast, men often prioritise physical attractiveness and status compatibility, employing flirtation as a means of assessing romantic interest. Complementing this perspective, Ekwueme (2024) demonstrates that language functions as a crucial tool for creating affinity and managing self-presentation. Women predominantly rely on emotive language, compliments, and emojis, whereas men frequently adopt direct propositions or emphasise social status. Flirtation, therefore, operates as a face-management strategy through which users negotiate identity, desirability, and relational intent.

Although existing studies have documented gendered patterns in flirtation and self-presentation, further research is required to explore the intersections of age, culture, platform-specific affordances, and globalised dating norms within the Nigerian context. Consequently, the present study builds on this body of literature to examine how gender dynamics shape flirtation and self-presentation on Nigerian dating platforms.

The study is theoretically grounded in Politeness Theory, developed by Brown and Levinson (1987), as cited in Ekwueme (2024). Politeness Theory explains how individuals employ linguistic strategies to manage “face” (self-image) during social interaction. In online flirtation, users utilise politeness strategies—such as compliments, indirectness, and mitigation—to establish affinity, express interest, and sustain interpersonal harmony. Gendered communication styles are evident in how male and female users negotiate face concerns while flirting, thereby reflecting broader socio-cultural expectations.

In addition, the study draws on Functional Linguistics, particularly the interpersonal meta-function of language as articulated by M. A. K. Halliday (1978). Functional linguistics elucidates how language is used to enact social relationships and express attitudes. In Nigerian online dating contexts, users employ informal language, emojis, and evaluative expressions to build rapport and intimacy (e.g., greetings such as “Hey gorgeous”). This framework is further supported by the appraisal theory of Martin and White (2005), which explains how language encodes emotions, judgments, and appreciation in flirtatious exchanges.

Finally, the study incorporates Speech Act Theory, proposed by J. L. Austin (1962), which conceptualises language as action. In online dating, utterances such as “Do you want to meet up?” function simultaneously as invitations and expressions of romantic interest. Collectively, these theoretical perspectives provide a robust framework for understanding how language constructs attraction, negotiates gender norms, and facilitates relationship formation within Nigerian online dating spaces.

Data Collection and Analysis Procedure

The profiles created by the users on the dating platforms such as Afro Introduction, Nexus, Mama Connect and Oloso Dating are selected and copied from the websites that showcase them. Purposive Random Selection is used to select the contents that responded to about 80 – 90% of the questions asked on the users' page. This is done to reduce the possibility of dealing with users who are not forthcoming with information. A total of fourteen profiles, evenly distributed among the male and female genders were treated. The linguistic strategies employed by male and female genders in self-presentation and flirtation were highlighted, the use of informal language in expressing emotions and the illocutionary and perlocutionary effects of language use by the users were discussed.

Data Analysis and Discussion

Profile 1



Self-Image Creation Strategy

The Use of Silence as Deceptive Technique

The user in Profile 1 technically avoided the opportunity of talking about qualities and behaviours that distinguish her under the 'about me' feature of the profile. This feature is the segment under which the user is supposed to present her qualities, especially her behaviour or character that can endear her to a potential suitor. Choosing to be silent on an important segment like this is a ploy to leave the suitor to make personal discovery about the other partner. For men who are not quick at finding fault or weaknesses, this might prove a herculean task.

Facial Expression Strategy

Facial expressions are powerful tools for convincing and luring a potential suitor to fall for a partner. The facial expression in profile 1 suggests calmness, relaxation and assurance of peace. A gentle smile that does not betray the intention of the heart or suggest the partner is under

pressure. The neutrality of the facial expression and the background objects successfully hides the social background of the partner; it is impossible for a suitor to conclude that the partner is open to an extravagant life. The type of clothes put on attests to this fact. However, the colour of the partner's hair suggests her blend with the fashion in vogue; it is a testament to the fact that she might not be a serious religious person. The picture provided in profile 1 is not a full body picture, ; this is also a strategy to hide the body figure or shape.

Intention / Desire Strategy

The age range specified by the partner is between 33 and 75. This points to the desperation of the partner to get a suitor not minding compatibility, ability to perform and state of health. The expected place of abode of the suitor is carefully mentioned to be Dallas, Texas or the United States while the partner herself is living in Lagos, Nigeria. The partner will fall among those who will likely abscond (that is japa) whenever the opportunity to relocate comes via the instrumentality of relationship or marriage.

Sentence Structure

The online page of the users is designed to accommodate both short and long sentences but short interrogative sentences are used to probe the mind of the users. Response to such questions such as:

- (a) Have children?
- (b) Smoke?
- (c) Drink?
- (d) Want more children?
- (e) Polygamy
- (f) Marital Status
- (g) Occupation
- (h) No of children
- (i) Oldest child
- (j) Youngest child

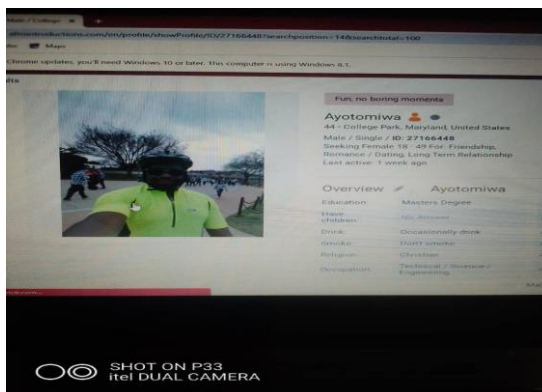
- (k) Education
- (l) Employment status
- (m) Annual income
- (n) Languages Spoken

is expected to be in Yes / No format. For instance, questions a – e are polar questions that require either Yes or No. It is observed that the partner in profile 1 did not provide any answers to questions that reveal her current state. Such questions as:

- (a) Have children?
- (b) Polygamy
- (c) Marital Status
- (d) Occupation
- (e) No of children
- (f) Oldest child
- (g) Youngest child
- (h) Education
- (i) Employment status
- (j) Annual income
- (k) Languages Spoken

were not answered. This reluctance to provide answers suggests the partner has things to hide. This is the deception that characterises online dating to which many suitors fall prey..

Profile 2



The Use of Positive Self-Image Creation Strategy

The background environment suggests that the suitor here is lively and cherishes a lively environment where there are activities. The selfie he took in such environment gives a hint about his love for the lovely environment. Altogether, he is trying to pass a message about his masculinity and social interests. The selfie does not reveal his bold face. This might be a tactic of hiding wrinkles or scratches on the face. Part of self-image creation in profile 2 is the suitor's location: College Park, Maryland, United States. This is intentionally stated to woo potential partners who are curious to relocate to other countries. The age range of females that he wants is put at between 18 and 49 years which suggests that the suitor is looking for fresh young girls as well as fairly old women. The intention behind this age selection might not be unconnected to the quest to satisfy one's sexual urge but not necessarily to settle down for a long-term relationship. Including the suitor's life plan shows him as someone with a focus. For instance, Life plan: retire in 19 years in Bali' is aimed at giving the impression that he is a good planner who does not live on chance or speculation. His preference to 'eat at every Anthony Bourdain top pick in Asia' suggests his adventurous tendency while his humanitarian services include rescuing 101 puppies and having rambunctious suffering children who get a scholarship to an Ivy League School. All this information is crafted to create a positive image of the suitor in profile 2 and to give a clue to what the potential partner should expect if their relationship works out.

Sentence Structure

The suitor in profile 2 mostly uses the command sentence structure to make declarative statements. A command sentence naturally begins with a verb and combines other grammatical parts such as prepositions, adverbs, nouns or adjectives. For instance:

- (a) Retire in 19 years in Bali
- (b) Eat at every Anthony Bourdain top pick in Asia
- (c) Rescue 101 puppies

- (d) Have rambunctious suffering children who get a scholarship to an Ivy League School.

Seldomly use phrase; for instance,

- (a) Fun, no boring moments

Use simple sentence once; e.g.

- (a) I do enjoy hiking, cooking, scuba diving, traveling

His style of converting the command sentence structure to express a declarative statement is a hint about his peculiar unpredictability nature against which the potential partner has to be careful of. The suitor in profile 2 has the tendency to be manipulative, judging from the way he manipulated the command structure of English sentence.

Profile 3



Use of Simplicity as a Self-Presentation Strategy

The background picture captures the agrarian setting that the partner may be coming from. The portrait picture further reveals the

willingness to be down to Earth and be as natural as possible. With little or no flamboyant make-up, the partner portrays modesty and the Christian culture. Response to questions such as:

- (a) Have children?
- (b) Smoke?
- (c) Drink?
- (d) Want more children?
- (e) Polygamy
- (f) Marital Status
- (g) Occupation
- (h) No of children
- (i) Oldest child
- (j) Youngest child
- (k) Education
- (l) Employment status

was carefully done and thoroughly reflected the position of the partner.

Sentence Structure

The partner in profile 3 combines phrases and simple sentence structure in presenting herself; for instance

- (a) I am Justinah (simple sentence)
- (b) 30 years old (phrase)
- (c) Single from Nigeria (phrase)
- (d) I am a Christian lover of God (simple sentence)
- (e) I am very friendly, caring, respectful and humble and fun to be with. (simple sentence)
- (f) I hate lies and chastising (simple sentence)
- (g) I am very simple person with a good heart. (simple sentence)
- (h) I don't accept polygamy. (simple sentence)

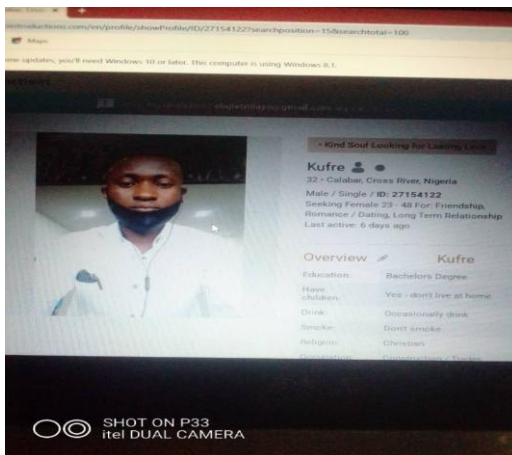
The choice of these two types of sentences suggests the simple nature of the life of the partner in profile 3, she employs brevity of expression to create simplicity and clear doubts. Her rejection of the practice of

polygamy was entrenched in a simple sentence. What would have been her reaction if her suitor had decided to marry another woman is expressed in the simple sentence in (h) above. The partner in profile 3 also combines strings of positive adjectives such as:

- (a) Lover of God
- (b) Very friendly, caring, respectful, humble
- (c) Very simple
- (d) Good heart

to persuade a potential suitor to have a look at her and initiate a discussion that will end in a relationship. Through these adjectives, the partner in profile 3 is emphasising moral values, religion and attitude. Her response to the question on employment status suggests she is self-employed. This further creates acceptance and desirability in the heart of a potential suitor.

Profile 4



The background of the picture used by the suitor in profile 4 conceals the environment he is coming from. The use of a nose mask reminds one of someone who is health-conscious or a health practitioner. Being

conscious of the negative impression such background may send to a potential partner; he described himself as 'A kind soul looking for lasting love'.

The Intention Strategy

The intention of the suitor in profile 4 is to find someone who is ready for marriage that will last long therefore, being thirty-two years of age, the age range from which he wants to choose a partner is between 23 – 48. Although if it happens, he finds a partner of Forty-eight years, it depends on his level of maturity to handle someone with that age gap of eighteen years. Eventually, the age range may be both realistic and unrealistic considering the culture where the partner and the suitor is sharing. This large age gap is a deceptive strategy that can lead to misunderstandings after all. It is also capable of betraying the intention of the suitor that he is not sincere with his selection, perhaps after satisfying his sexual urge might dump such a partner. However, if he finds a partner from the age range of twenty-three to thirty, the intention might be to settle for a long relationship. He has given this wide gap to maximise his selection from the pool of partners that may not consider age as an issue, but possess the qualities he looks for in a partner.

Sentence Structure

The suitor in profile 4 combines compound and complex sentence structure in his self-presentation strategy. For instance;

- (a) I am a true romantic at heart who believes love is about the little things, sharing laughter, holding hands and building memories that last a lifetime. (complex sentence)
- (b) I value honesty, kindness and deep connection and I am looking for someone who wants more than just..... (compound sentence)

The choice of this sentence structure is to allow the suitor to combine several thoughts together in one single expression. It indicates his

preference for communicating and making himself heard once and for all. He is likely to be a good communicator but not necessarily a good listener.

Emotion Strategy

The suitor uses words that appeal to the emotion of the partner by presenting himself as a true romantic at heart. He builds on this emotional appeal by declaring what he believes in, that is, he believes that 'love is about the little things' which the potential partner will count much on. This strategy prepares the heart of a potential partner for consideration and acceptance. The suitor knew what was appealing to the opposite sex, such as sharing laughter, holding hands and building memories that last a lifetime and he included them in his self-presentation. The suitor did not hesitate to list his values, and he chose nouns (such as honesty, kindness and deep connection) to list them all. These nouns are abstract, which do not convey any mental picture or imagery to the potential partner, but they are things that manifest in attitude and behaviours.

Profile 5



The background of the picture used in profile 5 suggests the environment or the social setting that surrounds the partner. Though the image of the partner is fascinating, showcasing well blended attire and jewellery, the materials at the background suggest someone from a balanced social background.

Facial Expression Strategy

Facial beauty is believed to be powerful and instrumental to catching the attention of men who are potential suitors on online dating platforms, the partner in profile 5 concentrates on the face as a strategy for self-presentation. The look on the face is calm, relax and inviting. The dress on the head combines well with the colour of the body and the clothes worn. The makeup is not out of place either. The name used on the platform 'beauty' summed up the personality of the partner in profile 5.

Intention Strategy

The intention of the partner in profile 5 is to showcase her beauty while restricting her weaknesses. The background picture that reveals only the head may be a strategy to conceal other parts of the body that are not good enough for display. A concentration on one aspect of the body may be a ploy to hide others. It could lead to deception. The age of the partner in profile 5 is thirty-three and she seeks a suitor between forty and seventy. This gap points to how desperate the partner is in seeking a suitor, without considering compatibility or ability to perform. It is common with female partners to select suitors who are relatively older than them, few have this exemption whenever it is becoming apparent that they are not likely to get from a particular age bracket. By appealing to the older age bracket, the potential partner is also navigating the world of rich and successful individuals who are no longer struggling to make money or achieve fame. It is a simple way of sharing in the success of those who have made it, not in the success of those who are struggling to survive.

Sentence Structure

The partner in profile 5 uses simple sentences to present her preferences and what she expects from a potential suitor. For instance;

- (a) I am easy-going person, kind, honest, loyal, fun, open-minded and emotionally available who prides herself in being very loving and caring. (complex sentence)
- (b) I need a family-oriented man, honest, caring, and a good listener. (simple sentence)
- (c) A man who is ready for friendship, lover and marriage (simple sentence)
- (d) Please no games (command sentence)
- (e) I don't accept polygamy. (simple sentence)

Adjectives are one of the image-making grammatical tools the partner in profile 5 has used to present herself. She makes use of adjectives in its base form to qualify herself. Adjectives such as 'easy-going person, kind, honest, loyal, fun, open-minded and emotionally available' are deliberately chosen to sway the mind of a potential suitor to her side. It is an appeal that goes beyond facial fascination to emotional sensitivity. Being 'emotionally available' is an attempt to arouse the potential suitor to action and a guarantee that he would meet a soulmate. Using a simple sentence, the partner warns a potential suitor not to play games of having a second wife. She stated this clearly in 'I don't accept polygamy'.

Openness as Strategy

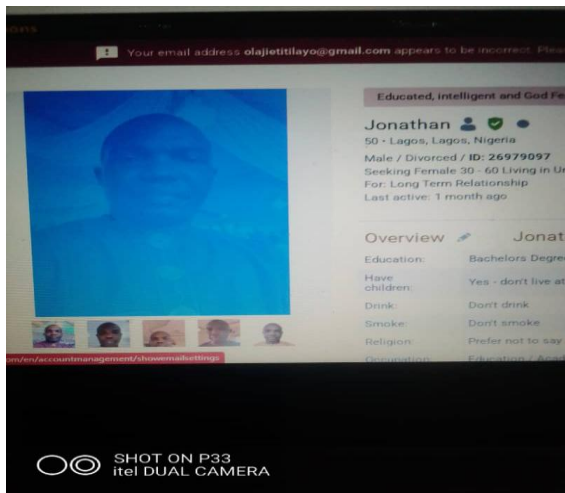
Being open to dialogue and being able to give details about oneself is considered a strategy for winning the confidence of others. When one is not withholding information from the other party, one is trying to build trust and reliance. The partner's response to the following polar questions:

- (a) Have children?

- (b) Smoke?
- (c) Drink?
- (d) Want more child?
- (e) Polygamy
- (f) Marital Status
- (g) Occupation
- (h) No of children
- (i) Oldest child
- (j) Youngest child
- (k) Education
- (l) Employment status

Shows that she is ready for a meaningful relationship that forecloses playing games.

Profile 6



The background of this picture is not bright enough to quickly identify the potential suitor. This can be interpreted to mean a ploy to fake identity or hide personality. Though at the footage of the picture, there are other pictures which carry similar traits with the one on display.

Fake Identity as a Strategy

Dull or blurred pictures hide the correct identity of users who want to hide their personality for one reason or another. While good or crystal-clear pictures always reveal the correct identity of people, the blurred ones subject the identity to speculations and doubts. The identity of the potential suitor in profile 6 is debatable and as such it is a red flag that should warn a potential partner that there will be crisis if the relationship is fostered.

Intention Strategy

The suitor in profile 6 is fifty years old, lives in Lagos and he's looking for a female partner between thirty and sixty years old. The age of the suitor suggests that he is probably looking for a replacement. The age range preferred by him falls within the age range of females who are either widows or single mothers. His intention may not include bearing children but for companionship and care. By using adjectives such as 'educated, intelligent and God-fearing' to qualify his potential partner, it suggests he prioritised these values in a would-be partner.

Sentence Structure

The suitor uses a combination of simple and complex sentences to present himself on dating platform. For instance;

- (a) I am a kind-hearted person who enjoys meaningful conversations, peaceful walks and spending quality time with loved ones. (complex sentence)
- (b) I have a passion for learning, helping others and making people smile in my free time. (compound sentence)
- (c) I enjoy reading. (simple sentence)

The personality of the suitor in profile 6 is described in the following adjectival phrases:

- (a) Kind-hearted person
- (b) Meaningful conversations

- (c) Peaceful walks
- (d) Quality time
- (e) Passion for learning

Linguistically, it could be deduced from these adjectival phrases that this suitor, despite being a kind-hearted person, he only entertains meaningful conversations and peaceful walks. This is an indirect way of saying 'I don't like nagging, gossip or gist' which are characteristic of the opposite sex. Having passion for learning may suggest the suitor is a teacher at his age; in other words, he may be engrossed in studying most of the time and only have time for others when he is free. This inference/sentiment is echoed in 'making people smile in my free time' It takes a partner who is sensitive to language use to decode what is not said from what is said by this suitor.

Profile 7



The background picture did not reveal the partner's social background, though it gives the impression of a simple, moderate and modern lifestyle. The portrait is clear enough while the make-up is minimal. This background simply points to moderate simplicity, which many

potential suitors on the platform may be looking for. The appearance of the partner is not flamboyant, seductive but minimally appealing. This type of presentation may not be unconnected with the partner's religious background, which may not have anything to do with richness or poverty.

Simplicity as a Strategy

Some categories of females use a simple presentation strategy to drive home a point about someone who is not hard to maintain, especially when it comes to a husband taking responsibility for caring for and providing for the wife. The simplicity strategy is aimed at suggesting to a potential suitor that the female partner in question does not live an extravagant life, contrary to the belief that many women require huge amount of money for maintenance. A simplicity strategy does not imply that the female partner is cheap or simple in character; it only conveys affordability or maintainability. This aspect is highly relevant to a suitor who may not be rich but possesses good qualities of a lover and home builder.

Intention Strategy

The partner in profile 7 is thirty-five years old and seeking a male suitor who is between thirty-nine and sixty years. This age gap forms the pool from which the partner intends to select a suitor for friendship and marriage. The goal of this partner is reflected in her positive response to the question 'Wants more Children?' Therefore, leaving a large age gap is aimed at inducing more potential males to seek her friendship and eventually end up in marriage. Most females believed that old male partners demonstrate boldness, know what they want and always go after it. The older a man is, the likely he is to have weathered the storm of life and come up with outstanding results. The partner in this profile is divorced with a child; this could be responsible

for her desperation to choose a suitor from a wider population that may not fall within her age bracket. Her intention not to reveal her employment status and her annual income is a tactic of sifting the responsible and caring husband from the irresponsible ones. However, suitors are likely to take her for a liability.

Sentence Structure

The partner in this profile adopts a third-person narrative technique using all types of sentences in her 'about me' page to present herself and the attributes of her expected suitor. For instance;

- (a) No fake zone here, be warned (a combination of a phrase and a command)
- (b) She is a woman who believes in real love – the kind built on honesty, respect and deep connection. (complex sentence)
- (c) She is not searching for perfection but for a genuine man with values, commitment, communication and growing together through life's seasons. (complex sentence)
- (d) She knows who she is, what she wants and she is ready for a serious relationship rooted in trust and shared dreams. (compound / complex sentence)
- (e) She is looking for her soulmate – the real man who is ready to love deeply, stand firmly and build something meaningful that lasts. (compound / complex sentence)
- (f) You must be God-fearing and have deep love for God. (compound sentence)
- (g) Don't near me if you don't have all these attributes and if you are a man who gets angry easily, please don't write me, thanks a bunch. (complex sentence)
- (h) She is looking for a man whose character naturally complements her Spirit. (complex sentence)
- (i) Someone confident yet humble, strong yet gentle. (compound sentence)

- (j) A man who knows how to lead with integrity, communicate with honesty and listen with intention. (complex sentence)
- (k) He is emotionally mature, values loyalty and understands that love is built through effort, patience and mutual respect (complex sentence)
- (l) He appreciates her depth, supports her dreams and brings peace rather than confusion into her life. (complex sentence)
- (m) Together, they would balance One another – two whole individuals choosing partnership, growth and a love that feels safe, steady and real. (compound / complex sentence)

The self-presentation the partner in this profile makes is that of a high-sounding, self-confident individual who knows his onions. The partner is reinforcing the earlier intention of shifting responsibility on the potential male suitor ‘who is ready to love deeply, stand firmly and build something meaningful that lasts.’ This profile is silent about what the female partner brings to the relationship. The choice of adverbs such as ‘deeply’, ‘firmly’, and the nominal phrase ‘something meaningful that lasts’ suggests the task master nature of the partner in this profile. Anything short of the prescribed adjectives will not be satisfying to the partner. The claim that she is not searching for perfection in sentence c above has been overshadowed by her emphasis on her self-awareness /worth as expressed in sentence d. The command ‘No fake zone here, be warned’ is to discourage unserious suitors and to send a signal to those who are genuinely looking for a relationship that she is ready for a serious relationship that will last. The attributes of the would-be suitor are painstakingly spelt out in sentences f – m. These daring qualities are unwavering conditions for the partner in this profile to accept a long-term relationship.

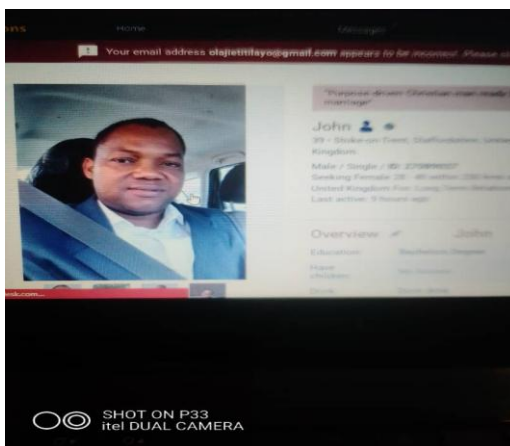
Self-elevation as a Strategy

The partner in this profile engages in self-elevation. Self-elevation, in some contexts, is good because it affirms a dictum which says you will be addressed the way you are dressed. For instance, sentences such as

- She knows who she is, what she wants and she is ready for a serious relationship rooted in trust and shared dreams.
- Don't near me if you don't have all these attributes and if you are a man who gets angry easily, please don't write me, thanks a bunch
- He appreciates her depth, supports her dreams and brings peace rather than confusion into her life

Which is used to lay emphasis on the ego of this female partner, trying to present herself as a woman of class. For suitors who are not as educated as she is, this might be a red flag and for those who are educated, it could be interpreted as pride. However, it always takes two to tangle.

Profile 8



The background of this profile picture suggests the male suitor is on transit. The facial expression is calm and reassuring. Being inside a car

in this context does not imply he is the car's owner. He is not behind the wheel and does not pose as the owner by sitting at the back of the car. However, the background is presenting an impression of someone who is averagely well to do. The background can enhance positive image laundering which can become a strategy for securing the attention of a female partner.

Wealth as a Strategy

The position of comfort and possession of valuable items, such as a car or other means of mobility, can be used as a strategy to attract attention in online dating. The male in profile eight utilised the idea of being in a car as a strategy to communicate his wealth and comfort level in society to the potential female partner who is likely to prioritise such possession of wealth in their quest to choose a suitor. His outfit suggests an educated individual or someone who is into a white-collar job. He might as well be a businessman because he did not put on a tie; whichever way it is being interpreted, the dressing suggests he is from a poor background or educationally deficient. His profile picture may appeal primarily to the educated civil servants.

Intention Strategy

The male in this profile is thirty-nine years old and looking for a female partner between twenty-eight to forty years old. The intention of this male suitor is foreshadowed in the age range from which he seeks a partner. He is a young man in his late thirties who is desperate to have a home and a wife who will bear him children; consequently, his choice of a female lies within the realm of those who are still sexually active and whose propensity for productivity is still high. Seeking a partner from a higher age range might betray his good intention of having a home where he wants to settle with a woman and his children. Extending the age range to forty suggests he probably considers

maturity, experience and respect. He does not rule out the possibility of marrying a single mother given that most single mothers fall within the age range of 25 to 35.

Location as a Strategy

Male suitors on online dating platforms use their location as a strategy to appeal to females. The fact that the male suitor lives in Staffordshire, United Kingdom is aimed at giving emotional appeal to a potential female who might be obsessed with the idea of relocating. The imagination of leaving a less developed country for a fully developed one where life of luxury is guaranteed may cloud the sense of judgment of some females to jump on such suitors through whom they thought they would live out their dreams.

Sentence Structure

The user of the profile used adjectival phrases and complex sentences such as:

- (a) Purpose-driven (adjectival phrase)
- (b) Christian man ready for marriage (adjectival phrase)
- (c) I am a calm, respectful and God-fearing man who values honesty, responsibility and growth, (complex sentence)
- (d) I believe in building strong relationships based on trust, communication and mutual respect, (complex sentence)
- (e) I enjoy learning, self-development and meaningful conversation (simple sentence)

Through apt use of adjectival phrases, the suitor in profile eight describes who he is, his ideological alignment which hangs on 'purpose' rather than emotion. He presented his religion, Christianity, with the intention of appealing to females who may share the same religious background. By inference, he is not comfortable with females from a different religious circle, hence he has to state it without using a longer sentence. Notwithstanding stating this fact in a and b above, he uses a complex sentence in c and d highlighting his core values: honesty,

responsibility, trust, communication and mutual respect. In the last sentence, he identifies his career goal (learning and self-development) as well as his social interaction with others, that is, he aligns with partners who have meaningful ideas to share while he may not have the time for those with frivolities.

Findings

The discourse structure of self-presentation and flirtation on Nigerian dating platforms reveal the following:

- (a) Females use visual images that present the most appealing parts of their body (face) to flirt and persuade suitors to choose them as partners.
- (b) Age range is used as a strategy to reveal the intention behind seeking a partner by both males and females on dating platforms. Males are rigid with their choice of age range; they usually restrict potential female partner to a certain age range that accommodate their intention or purpose of the relationship. Most males preferred female partners that are still sexually active and productive, but the females are flexible with their choice of age range, which accommodates a wider age gap without considering compatibility and ability to perform sexually.
- (c) Males dwell more on values that are required to make marriage successful while females weaponise these values as a condition for accepting the males in the relationship.
- (d) Wealth and location are used by males as a strategy to appeal to the females but females use dressings, make-ups and facial attraction to appeal to the males.
- (e) Silence or lack of response to critical questions is used as a strategy by females to dodge responsibilities, commitment and

reliance while males use a fake identity as a strategy for hiding their personality.

- (f) Females use more complex sentence than males while females use more adjectives that qualify abstract nouns than the males.

S/N	Grammar Selection	Males	Females
1	Adjectives	7	18
2	Phrase	7	3
3	Simple Sentence	6	8
4	Compound Sentence	2	2
5	Complex Sentence	4	11
6	Emojis	-	-
7	Written Communication	4	3
8	Command Sentence	-	2

Fig. 1 – Table showing grammar selection and frequency of use by males and females on Dating Platforms

The number of females who use command sentences and simple sentences are more than that of males. Frequent use of command by females can be interpreted as a warning mechanism against suitors who play pranks.

Recommendations

It is recommended that users of online dating platforms should be ready to engage in more meaningful conversations by stating details that are germane to what the other partner may be looking for. Lack of response to critical questions may be interpreted as a red flag dispelling potential partner. Since it is believed that human beings are not angels, there is no One with impeccable character; therefore, it is recommended that users of online dating platforms use language constructively in revealing their areas of weakness to help their partners in making the right choice.

Conclusion

Males and females boldly and consciously express themselves on dating platforms using different strategies such as intentions, deception, age range, wealth, location and fake identities to present who they are. Both genders use positive adjectives in describing the qualities they expect in their would-be partners; using various sentences, they express their desire for long term relationship which should culminate in marriage. Marriage is the goal of both males and females on Nigerian dating platforms; therefore, both parties express their expectations from whosoever they would want to be in a relationship with. While females are evasive over questions that address issues of responsibilities, finance and care, males lay emphasis on present and future goals, career development and the readiness to cultivate a conducive atmosphere for relationships.

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